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ABSTRACT

James Britton's model of the uses of language is discussed as a way to focus and organize studies of response to literature. After the model has been explicated, specific studies are discussed in relation to a number of research areas: early forms of literary experience, the child's developing "sense of story," the child's awareness that literary forms present a "structured whole," relationships between the ways children talk about stories and Piaget's stages of cognitive development, reading interests, and the nature of mental "representations of experience." (Author)

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Studies in the Spectator Role:

An Approach to Response to Literature

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Introduction

One of the most encouraging features of recent research in response to literature has been a movement away from simple empiricism toward the explication of a number of theoretical, explanatory frameworks of considerable power and generalizability. Whether we are most comfortable drawing them from psychology, linguistics, or philosophy, such theories are important because they shape both the design of our studies and our interpretations of results. In effect, they help us to recognize which results are interesting and profitable, and which add little to our knowledge. Rather than contradictory, the various frameworks for approaching response to literature are often complementary, placing similar data at the vertex of a series of converging lines of explanation, and thereby making us more aware of the multiple dimensions of the phenomenon we are studying.

Even more encouraging is the fact that, beginning from quite different theoretical orientations, there is a significant degree of commonality in the conclusions which various investigators are reaching.

My own research in the general area of response to literature has been set within the specific framework of James Britton's model of the uses of language. The theoretical background to this model has been elaborated most fully in Language and Learning (1970); its practical application in the study of children's writing has been demonstrated in The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) (1975).

Spectator and Participant

Central to Britton's model is an awareness of the very different sets of conventions which we bring to bear in approaching language which is, roughly, literary and that which is, roughly, scientific. In scientific discourse, we enter with the expectation that we will participate in an ongoing dialogue. Each bit of evidence is legitimately tested for 'truth' against whatever criteria we can bring to bear from our experience as a whole. We can accept some parts while rejecting others, and can argue with the inductive or deductive principles upon which the argument is based. And we can do this because scientific discourse operates in a context of accepted, shared rules of evidence and argument (what Thomas Kuhn [1962] calls the "paradigm" underlying the field) which each participant in the scientific dialogue understands and is expected to honor.

With literary language, on the other hand, we begin with the expectation that we will suspend our judgment of detail until we have a sense of the shape of the whole. The criteria which we bring to bear are those of internal consistency and completeness rather than of external truth and logical validity. We are spectators of a presented experience and, as Holland (1968) has noted, the fact that we are only spectators may allow us to become even more deeply involved in the experience which we are witnessing.

The paradox implied here is a real and important one that should not be obscured by the terminology: in drawing the distinction between spectator and participant roles, we are not drawing a distinction between

involvement and disinterest. Both roles invite passionate commitment and both sometimes lead to boredom and passivity.

The distinction between spectator and participant roles can be extended beyond language to the ways in which we assimilate the general experiences of our lives. The British psychologist D.W. Harding (1937) has begun in this way, contrasting the expectations held by and for the participants in a street accident and the spectators who merely happen onto the scene. He, too, moves from there to a consideration of the implications of the distinction for our understanding of literary experience.

Drawing the distinction between spectator and participant in these broad terms has a number of consequences for our studies of response to literature. One of the most important is that the perennial problem of defining what we will accept as "really" literary becomes irrelevant. When we are studying response in the spectator role, the comic book or the James Bond novel is just as legitimate an object of our concern as is the work of Shakespeare or Milton or Hemingway. There are similarities as well as differences in what such diverse works ask of their readers, and our responses to each of them are part of our spectator role experiences.

A second consequence of drawing the distinction between spectator and participant roles in language use is that the line between author and audience, indeed the term "response," begins to blur. We use language in the spectator role when we tell a story; we use it when we read a poem; we use it when we pass an idle moment with an amusing anecdote; we use it when we listen to a friend recounting a narrow escape in the rice paddies of Vietnam. Again, there are similarities as well

as differences in the processes involved, and our understanding will remain incomplete until we have studied all of the dimensions. This broadens the range of methodological approaches which are legitimate in the study of "response": we can look at the writer and the speaker in the process of composing, as well as the reader and the listener in the act of responding.

The third consequence of drawing this distinction between spectator and participant roles is in some ways both subtler and more important. It stems from the fact that spectator and participant are defined in terms of attitudes toward experience (in this case, experience expressed in language) rather than in terms of characteristics of text. This in turn raises the question of what makes us respond to a particular text as though it were literary rather than scientific, and what the consequences of choosing one or the other mode are. (Or put another way, we can ask why we have found it necessary to develop two such distinct modes of language use.)

Representing Experience

Answering this last set of questions can lead to quite a lengthy excursion into philosophical and psychological theory. I will sketch briefly the line of argument that I find most satisfactory; it is developed more thoroughly in Applebee (1978).

We function psychologically by constructing representations of experience, a kind of mental record or archive of our previous encounters with life. This record operates at all levels, from the simplest enactive behavior chain to the most highly abstract representation of a philosophical "ideal." The purpose of such representations is not simply to provide an archival record of the past, however; they also

serve to guide our encounters with new experiences. They provide us with a set of reasonable expectations about the nature of our encounters with the world.

Susanne Langer, in her monumental study, Mind (1967, 1972), has argued that all of our mental experience can be divided into two broad categories, differing in their origins but not, fundamentally, in their underlying nature. One category she calls subjective, the product of the internal and complex workings and reactions of the individual mind; the other she calls objective, which is "felt as impact" and seems to arise independently of individual volition. Her distinction has many immediately recognizable parallels: self and not self, emotional and rational, affective and cognitive, personal and public.

Extrapolating relatively directly from Langer's theories to the study of literary response focusses our attention in two ways: first, it suggests we should find basic similarities in the thought processes underlying spectator and participant role experiences. (We might expect, for example, to find strong parallels between Piaget's findings about the development of "scientific" concepts and our own findings about "literary" ones.) Second, we would be led to expect characteristic differences in the way a text begins to be assimilated, leading one sort of text to be experienced, in Langer's terms, as "impact" and the other sort to be experienced as "action."

Poetic and Transactional Techniques

At this point it will help if we remember that spectator and participant roles are very broad categories which subsume a wide

variety of specific uses of language. These more specific uses can be ordered along a continuum related essentially to the techniques of symbolization which are employed. In the participant role, we have what Britton has called transactional techniques: these are the rules and conventions which are necessary for transactions between individuals, for the development of theory as well as the day-to-day business of life. The continuum of transactional techniques is essentially one of degrees of formalization, having at one extreme the rigid specifications of symbolic logic, and at the other the taken-for-granted conventions of casual discussion among friends. Britton has outlined some of the stages along this continuum in his studies of children's writing (Britton et al., 1975).

In the spectator role there is again a continuum of techniques, but it reflects a different set of organizational principles. This is based on what Langer (1967, 1972) has called presentational symbolism, which seeks to present a complete experience for contemplation. Britton (1970), studying uses of language, called these techniques "poetic," since it is in mature poetry that they are exhibited most fully.

In general, poetic techniques are less well understood than are transactional ones, perhaps because in the most highly developed forms of the transactional the rules-of-use are stated relatively fully (as premises, permitted transformations, and so on), whereas in the most highly developed forms of the poetic they are not. Langer has made the point that however we might choose to formulate them, the essential characteristic of these techniques is the establishment

of relationships:

> ...it is fairly patent that the establishment and organization of tensions is the basic technique in projecting the image of feeling, the artist's idea, in any medium. They are the essential structural elements whereby the "primary illusion" of the incipient work is established, its scope and potentialities given and its development begun. (1967; p. 164)

Her comments are a good starting point for any research into the nature of poetic techniques and are likely to remain a good, if somewhat generalized, summary of our findings in this area as our understanding grows fuller.

As with transactional techniques, the continuum of poetic uses of language ranges from sophisticated literary works in which the various elements of the discourse are interwoven on many different levels, through simpler (though not necessarily less entertaining) stories, to the casual anecdotes of conversation among friends.

Casual conversation among friends is a pivotal element in Britton's theory, though a detailed discussion is not necessary for our present purposes. Such conversation is important as a mature form of what Britton calls the "expressive mode" of language use, a mode where spectator and participant roles meet and are easily exchanged, and where poetic and transactional techniques are used in easy juxtaposition. Developmentally and generically, it lies at the heart of the model (figure 1).

Figure 1 about here

At this point we can bring together some of the theoretical notions we have been discussing, in order to answer the question with

Figure 1. The Uses of Language

Poetic——————Expressive——————Transactional

SPECTATOR PARTICIPANT

which we began this excursion: why have we found it necessary to develop two such distinct modes of language use? Put simply, we have evolved poetic techniques in order to represent subjective experience, and transactional techniques to represent objective experience. Such representations-through-language allow us to order and reorder our own experience and to share this experience with others.

The formalization inherent in transactional symbolization has as its basis an externalizing process; because the rules are stated they appear "external" and achieve an appearance of objectivity in Langer's sense. They come to seem "outside" the individual and to have a validity and existence quite independent of any one of us. Langer (1967, 1972) and Polanyi (1958) have both commented on the way in which such objectivity is created through formalization, and the extent to which the system that results may bear little relation to usual thought processes.

If we attempt to use transactional techniques to describe subjective experience, that experience also becomes external and objective; we can analyze and describe it, but such analyses do not provide an adequate representation of the experience itself. (The difference is similar to that of knowing that a friend has a toothache, and perhaps even knowing its cause, and having a toothache oneself.) To symbolize subjective experience requires a different approach, one which invites the reader or listener to recreate the subjective experience for themselves; the essential process is synthesis rather than analysis. The author of a poem, for example, presents us with a text in which a myriad of specific elements (sounds, symbols, words, actions, themes, and so on) are

arranged in a particular way. As readers of the poem, we are asked to bring our own ways of understanding to bear upon these elements. We decide that the setting is pastoral, that the characters are good, that the plot is interesting and the outcome tragic. The meanings that we take will depend upon our own mood and experience, as well as on the way in which the author has arranged the elements of the work. No two readers will take exactly the same meaning because the process of understanding is an internal, personal one. The meaning will arise out of the patterns that are perceived, just as the meaning we take from any new experience arises out of the patterns we choose to impose upon it. Nonetheless most readers of a common age in a common culture will construe the work in a similar way, because they will be making sense of the text through a similar screen of conventions and presuppositions.

At the level of specific techniques, virtually all discourse uses both poetic and transactional symbolism. A novelist will summarize a theme or describe a character; an essayist will use a range of rhetorical devices. Such mixtures of technique rely for success on a congruence between objective and subjective experience. Where the congruence can be established it strengthens the text; if the congruence is eroded, the text is quite likely to be rejected.

At the level of the discourse as a whole, however, the choice is not such an open one. One of the basic principles of poetic technique involves the establishment of relationships between the various parts of the poem or story, and the 'meaning' of the discourse involves an understanding of the full set of relationships. To achieve such an understanding requires a perception of the whole, and it is from this

that the spectator role gains its most characteristic feature: the release from the demands of immediate response. To stop the villain *in media res* is to change the shape of the experience--and unfairly alter its meaning--whereas to argue with the facts in the course of a transactional argument is a fair test of its validity.

Research Questions

We have identified the spectator role with some basic processes of mind and have argued that response in the spectator role engages directly with the same psychological processes that we use in confronting any new experience. These processes, we have suggested, involve *representations* of experience, representations constructed out of our past experiences and shaping our expectations when we encounter new ones. In designing and interpreting studies of response to literature, the most interesting questions concern the kinds of expectations that are shaping response, the sources of these expectations, and the influence of each new experience upon our representations of experience (and hence upon our later activities). Questions posed in these ways can focus studies in virtually all of the traditional areas of study of response, including reading interests, developmental change, effects of instruction, psychoanalytic influences, and comprehension. Because of the many sorts of expectations that are operative in any encounter with text, adequate conceptualization requires consideration of more general social, linguistic, and cultural conventions, as well as of developmental constraints on the ways in which children "represent" or [illegible]lize experience to themselves and others. This in turn implies that productive methodological and analytic approaches can be--and need to

be--drawn from a variety of academic disciplines and turned to the specific ends of our own studies.

We will turn now to some illustrations of how techniques from different lines of research have amplified our understanding of spectator role uses of language, and to some examples of fruitful areas for further investigation. The topics that will be discussed include early forms of spectator role experience, the child's emerging "sense of story," the nature of poetic form, developmental changes in ways of discussing the spectator role, reading interests, and the nature of a representation of experience.

Early Forms of the Spectator Role

How soon does the child begin to differentiate between spectator and participant roles?

Several lines of evidence converge to suggest that the basic, attitudinal distinction between spectator and participant roles of language use is a very early one, perhaps occurring as early as an infant's first structured babbling. Ruth Weir (1962), studying the presleep monologues of her son Anthony at the age of two-and-a-half, provides many examples of language which the child is using to structure his experiences for himself. Since language is a new and central experience for the child at this age, many of these examples involve play with language, but there are also attempts to deal through language with other important events in the child's life (ranging from the unfairness of the fact that the family dog--but not the child--is allowed to cross the street, to the shared attention among mother, father, and son).

Studying the speech of "Nigel" at an even earlier age, Michael

Halliday (1975) similarly finds evidence of the use of language in what he calls the "imaginative function." He provides an excellent summary of one line of development in the spectator role:

> ...the child also uses language for creating a universe of his own, a world literally of pure sound, but which gradually turns into one of story and make-believe and let's pretend, and ultimately into the realm of poetry and imaginative writing. (p. 20)

Halliday claims that Nigel has begun this progression by 15 months, at a stage which precedes the acquisition of the lexico-grammatical system that is usually identified as the beginning of speech.

Halliday and Weir are both linguists, and neither was primarily concerned with the origins of literary experience. Their evidence is also tentative in that each relies upon a corpus of data gathered from a single child. Their analyses gain power from the theoretical perspectives that each brings to bear, and, for our purposes, from the convergence of views in an area which was, for them, of only peripheral concern. Careful study of the differentiation of imaginative or spectator role uses of language nonetheless remains for other investigators.

Sense of Story

At a slightly older age, we have a rich body of data related to one aspect of children's spectator role experience: their ability to tell a story. Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) gathered 360 stories from children between the ages of two and five, in response to the simple request, "Tell me a story." Though their method of recording the stories makes the corpus inappropriate for some kinds of analysis,[1] it is possible to use their collection to demonstrate that by about

two-and-a-half children have begun to develop expectations about what "telling a story" involves, adopting certain basic conventions of story telling, and becoming more adept at the use of these conventions as the children grow older.

Stories are of course only a subset of spectator role experience, and we await studies of early development of other genres (rhymes, for example, and acting-out of story themes).

Story telling is only one side of a child's experience with stories: the expectations that shape the stories they tell must come primarily from the stories they have heard. Our best data about very young children's direct response to stories they have heard is again in case studies, particularly Dorothy White's (1954) diary-chronicle of her daughter Carol's experiences before the age of five. As a librarian, White is sensitive to both books and children and provides many intriguing insights into the changing needs and interests which books can satisfy in these first years. Among the developments which can be traced using the diary entries are a gradual complication in the child's concept of what a story is, as it progresses from a history to a representation of experience. ("Not real England," Carol asserts at about the age of four, "just paper England," p. 127.) Other developments include the enjoyment of nonsense as another legitimate spectator role genre, a concern with the origin of stories, the direct interaction between life and literature, and a lack of concern until a relatively late age with the fictional element in most spectator role narrative.

This sort of case study (here, a retrospective one based on the diary material) provides a wealth of hypotheses to explore with other

and larger groups of children. (The limits on the generalizability of Carol's experience are patent: she is unusually bright, comes from an unusually literary home, is observed unusually closely, and lives in New Zealand.)

An investigation using six and nine year old children in London, England, for example, explored the extent to which they recognize that most of the stories they enjoy are fictional, as well as their knowledge of some of the other conventions of this story world. With school age children, it is possible to ask quite directly about their expectations and responses to stories, as long as one remembers that the particular wording of a question can have a very strong influence on the response. Preadolescents in particular will respond to the most literal interpretation of a question rather than to the underlying intent.

What emerged with the London children was that beliefs at age six were wavering: most of the children interviewed would defend at length the reality of one or another favored story character, but were less sure about whether all characters were similarly real. (It was not uncommon for a child to believe in Cinderella but not in Red Riding Hood--or vice versa.) Joseph, discussing giants, is typical of many both in his unquestioning acceptance of their place in the world and in the way he uses more general schemata to make sense of his literary experiences:

> Have you ever seen a giant?--David saw one when he was a little boy.--Have you ever seen one?--No.--Why do you think you've never seen one?--One was made, only David picked,...fired stones up and he fell to the ground and he was killed and he's in

heaven.--Do you think there ever used to be giants?--Yes.--Do you think there are any now?--No, they were all killed by the police. (Applebee, 1978; p. 44)

Joseph has obviously had a thorough introduction to the biblical narratives; in another part of the interview he uses the story of Noah and the flood to explain the disappearance of "witches and that," though he dates it all to "A long time ago when I was a baby."

By nine, such beliefs have disappeared; though some children initially treat such questions as an invitation to story telling, when they realize that the questions are being asked in earnest their immediate and quite universal reaction is to conclude that the investigator is singularly obtuse.

We might hypothesize that the lack of differentiation between fact and fiction which is evident in young children contributes to the power of stories in early socialization. The stories children hear are a very direct influence upon their expectations about what the world is like--its vocabulary and syntax as well as its characters and activities. As they grow older and more skeptical, it is the specific characters and their magical activities which children eventually reject, not the recurrent values, roles, and relationships to which the characters give a concrete form.

A Sense of the Whole

In discussing the nature of poetic discourse, we emphasized the importance of relationships between constituent parts, leading to a "structured whole." We also pointed out that the structuring principles which underlie spectator role discourse are relatively poorly understood. But though we have not been particularly successful in analyzing these

principles, we all use them whenever we read or tell a story.

Children, too, develop expectations about the structure of stories, and use those expectations in the stories they tell (though we might expect quite a large gap between ability to appreciate and ability to create). The relative simplicity of their stories makes them particularly amenable to analysis; the principles that emerge from such studies can be generalized in turn as hypotheses about the structure of more mature forms.

The most extensive investigations of psychologically meaningful wholes have been in the area of concept development. The work of Bruner, Brown, Vygotsky, and others leads us toward an analysis into elements with specified attributes; the nature of the conceptual whole then becomes a function of which attributes are criterial or defining, and of the relationships (identity, similarity, complementarity, and so on) recognized among attributes. Both the types of attributes and the nature of the relationships that are recognized as significant show characteristic developmental changes.

This type of analysis can be transposed relatively directly to children's stories. The plot of a story, for example, can be considered to be made up of a set of incidents, each with a specifiable set of attributes (characters, actions, setting, mood).[2] The problem of studying poetic form then becomes a problem of specifying the types of relationships among attributes present in a given story. Taking this approach to Pitcher and Prelinger's (1963) collection of stories told by two to five year olds leads to striking parallels with Vygotsky's (1962) reports of results from his studies of concept development.

Using nonsense words, Vygotsky asked children to master the concepts necessary to label a collection of blocks of varying colors and sizes. He called the first general stage "heaps," from the child's tendency to reach out and "heap" up the blocks when asked which ones should go together. Very young children sometimes use a similar organizational principle when asked to tell a story: they seize upon and ennumerate virtually anything in their perceptual field, with little beyond their immediate presence to link the elements of the 'story' together.

Five other, more sophisticated types of organization were also found in the children's stories, each with its own parallels in Vygotsky's studies. The full set and their associated concept levels are listed below:

Children's stories	Concepts
Heap	Heap
Sequence	Associative complex
Primitive narrative	Collection complex
Unfocussed chain	Chain complex
Focussed chain	Pseudoconcept
Narrative	True concept

The close association between these two organizational tasks is interesting and, one assumes, not accidental. Even more interesting is the fact that the six stages can be seen as the result of the development, and eventual integration, of two more basic structuring principles, centering and chaining. Centering involves the addition of new elements on the basis of attributes shared with a fixed "center"--a main character, a particular setting, or, in more sophisticated works, a theme or point of view. Chaining involves a linking of incidents one to another in a long chain, so that each

children's stories is a very powerful and general one for research in a complex area: the drawing of analogies to problems that have been approached successfully in other research areas often yields a fresh perspective that will open up new and profitable lines of inquiry.

The organizational schemata underlying children's stories serve a number of functions, of which one of the most important is their ability to simplify increasingly complex experiences. There is a sense in which any given event in a narrative is more highly predictable than any given event in, say, a sequence, because it is bound more fully to the other elements in the discourse. Though in analysing these stories we have been looking at children's productions rather than their responses to literature, a number of direct and testable hypotheses about response do emerge. We would expect, for example, that the child who is capable of producing a story with a simple narrative structure would also be able to use such a structure as a kind of scaffolding for his or her memory of stories heard, and should show evidence of such an assimilation in any retelling of unfamiliar stories. We might also expect that stories that make use of the more sophisticated modes of organization would be easier to retell than those with less sophisticated organizing principles. Finally, for any given child, we might expect to find that the use of these schemata or organizational patterns would develop first in responding to stories and would later be evident in telling stories. (There is an analogy here to adult experience: most of us respond to novels that we could not begin to write.)

Discussing Stories

The sorts of data that we have been discussing so far lie at best

on the borderline of what has traditionally been considered the scope of studies in response to literature. They were chosen to illustrate how such approaches can provide insight into processes which underlie both production and response in the spectator role. We will now turn to the type of data upon which the great majority of studies of response to literature have relied: what people say about what they have read.

First, we need to recognize that in this situation we are no longer looking at spectator role language directly. We are asking students to adopt the participant role to tell us what they can about the spectator role experience which they have had. Thus one of our tasks (in both design and interpretation) is to look <u>through</u> what they say, to the subjective, personal response which they are attempting to describe.

<u>The Child's Concept of Story</u> (1978) presents data from a series of tasks used with six, nine, thirteen, and seventeen year old children. The tasks are relatively traditional ones in this area of research: asking them to discuss stories they know, to retell unfamiliar material, to explain proverbs, to give reasons for liking or for not liking particular texts, and the like. The variety of tasks is essential, for the simple reason that each task produces its own characteristic and different response. A question such as "What do you think about that story?" produces a virtually universal "It's nice" or "I liked it"--which the NAEP (1973) discovered after going to considerable expense to gather responses to a similar question. "What was the story about" produces, at least with preadolescents, a tendency to give a long list

of characters. "Tell me about the story" prompts some children to an extended retelling. What saves the situation from disintegrating into chaos is the fact that underlying those aspects of response which are shaped by the demand characteristics of the experimental task, there remain broad and discernable patterns which apply to the full range of responses.

Rather than describe in detail particular experiments and sets of responses, we will concentrate here on the patterns that emerge from the various converging lines of evidence. These patterns--not surprisingly, if we accept the theoretical notions outlined in the early sections of this paper--parallel findings in other areas of psychological investigation, in particular the results of Piaget's investigations of various scientific concepts. His preoperational, concrete operational, and early and later formal operational stages provide a convenient way of organizing and interpreting results. (The particular populations sampled were chosen with his stages in mind, to maximize the ratio of between to within sample variation.)

During the preoperational stage, the child's representations of literary or spectator role experience take a very simple form: a one-to-one correspondence between the story and its mental representation. There is little or no evidence of recoding at this stage; there is virtually no summarization or categorization, though with a story that has not been thoroughly learned there may be a good deal of fragmentation and disorganization. The basic representational principle is an enactive one,[3] and the responses that result can be extensive. (In tasks asking children to discuss stories, for example, the six year olds gave longer average responses than any other age group.) The familiar

phenomena of centration, syncretism, and egocentrism are very evident at this stage, in tasks for which the enactive retelling of a story is obviously not appropriate. (This is the case, for example, in a request for reasons for liking a favorite story.) Such tasks yield very little evidence of any further structure or logical coherence in the child's representation of a story.

The acquisition of concrete operational schemata brings with it a new tendency toward summarization and categorization. The story is represented in terms of more general characteristics which it shares with other literary experiences: it may be an "adventure," for example, or a "happy story," or "about trains." For the first time, the child begins to give systematic reasons for liking or disliking stories, showing an ability to integrate various aspects of response through the categories into which the work has been classified. A favored story will be favored, for example, because it is "funny" and "about clowns."

It is at this stage that the child begins to engage in relatively extended transactional discussions of a story; at the preoperational stage, the child "discussing" a story relies on poetic techniques, reexperiencing the story in the process of retelling it.

Formal operational thought brings with it a number of changes, summed up most simply as an ability to look "beyond the information given" (Bruner, 1974). Developmentally, this finds expression in two stages. During the first (corresponding to the period during which Piaget asserts the mechanisms of formal operations are being acquired), the predominant approach to discussing literature is one of analysis. Everything becomes a legitimate topic of inquiry: the motives of

characters, the structure of the work, the explanation of personal reactions of pleasure or distaste. Paralleling and seemingly distinct from this analytic approach is a movement away from the exacting literalism of the preadolescent. Where a nine year old will explain a saying such as "When the cat is away, the mice will play" in terms of pets and rodents, a thirteen year old will see an analogy with a wider class of life experiences: "It is like when the teacher goes out, the children shout." This is a major step toward the recognition that literature is, in Denys Harding's (1962) words, "an accepted technique for discussing the chances of life."

The final step toward Harding's goal comes in the second stage of formal operational thought, which is characterized by an explicit concern with generalized meanings. The earlier focus on analysis now becomes somewhat secondary, as a part of the explanatory framework supporting the broader generalizations which are the real concern. Works are discussed in terms of their theme or point of view, and the effects of the work upon the reader begin to be formulated in terms of understanding gained (or not gained) through the experience, and the ways in which it has altered the reader's expectations or interpretations of the world.

Figure 3 provides a schematization of the trends we have been

Figure 3 about here

discussing, and illustrates one further aspect of this line of development: there is a parallel evolution in the ways children formulate their response to the objective characteristics of the work and the ways they describe the effect this objective construct has upon them.

Figure 3. Developmental Stages in the Formulation of Response

Mode of Thinking	Characteristic Response	
	Objective	Subjective
Preoperational (ages 2 to 6)	Narration, in whole or part	Syncretism, lacks integration
Concrete operational (ages 7 to 11)	Summarization and categorization	Categorization, attributed to the work
Formal operational stage I (ages 12 to 15)	Analysis of the structure of the work or the motives of the characters; understanding through analogy	Identification or perception of involvement in the work
Formal operational stage II (age 16 to adult)	Generalization about the work; consideration of its theme or point of view	Understanding gained or not gained through the work; its effect on the reader's own views.

Applebee, 1978; p. 124

There are two constraints on the model presented in figure 3 that need to be made explicit. First, it is a summary of children's preferred way of responding--of what they do when they have a choice about what to say and how to say it. It says nothing about what children can do if placed in a position where this preferred mode of response is rejected as inadequate or inappropriate, and nothing about the dimensions of response in interaction with a teacher or a peer.

Second, the model is based on those aspects of response which children are able to verbalize, and quite likely obscures some developments which are occurring at a less conscious or formulable level. One area where this arises concerns the effects of formal operations upon spectator role experience. In story completion tasks, there are marked differences in the ability of children at different ages to extrapolate from an incomplete text in order to provide an appropriate ending (Gardner, 1973; Gardner and Gardner, 1971). Young children tend to provide an ending that is linked with a single incident rather than with the overall structure of the story; slightly older ones draw upon a stock of conventional endings appropriate for stories of the type they are considering. Only in adolescence is there evidence of an ability to end a story in a way consistent with its overall structure, though these appropriate endings may not be very "creative."

The question that arises is whether the preadolescent's lack of sensitivity to overall structure is also present in reading or listening to complete stories. This requires a different kind of evidence, since children's ability to respond nonverbally may be considerably different from their ability to consciously extrapolate. As an interesting and very suggestive beginning in this area, we can cite DeBoer's (1938)

early study of children's responses to radio drama. Using physiological measures of pulse, blood pressure, and galvanic skin response, as well as records of overt motor reactions, he found that preadolescents' responses developed incident by incident, whereas adolescents and adults showed a development of response over the course of the drama. This was particularly evident in the case of surprise endings: adolescents, whose expectations seemed to be shaped by the early stages of the drama, reacted sharply when these expectations were upset. Younger children, reacting incident by incident, responded as though the "surprise" endings were no surprise at all.

Reading Interests

It is easy to criticize the typical study of reading interests for concentrating on superficial aspects of response: to learn that boys like adventure stories and girls prefer romance says very little about the processes that have led them to those preferences. It is nonetheless true that our evaluation of an experience is an important aspect of our encounter with it; we usually remember if we liked or disliked a book or an author long after our memory of the details of the story have faded.

We make such judgments as part of our general attempt to make sense of the experience, fitting it into our view of the world. George Kelly (1955) argues in his discussion of personal construct theory that each individual evolves a set of bipolar 'constructs' which are used to order and make sense of these experiences. In each particular domain of experience, a subset of those constructs having particular relevance and applicability will eventually be developed. Although

each of us develops a set of constructs in interaction with our uniquely personal experiences, because we function within a common cultural milieu there will be some commonality in the systems that emerge.

Kelly's work, though it proceeded independently and relies on very different terminology, is compatible with that of the other theorists on whom we have been drawing. (His notion of a system of constructs is essentially a way of describing and analysing "representations of experience.") Kelly's repertory grid techniques also provide us with some methodologies for going beyond the superficiality of the usual study of reading interests toward a fuller understanding of the kind of judgments that are made in responding to a story.

Grid techniques have been discussed in detail by Bannister and Mair (1968). Basically, they involve the rating of a number of elements from the domain of interest (in this case, writing in the spectator role) on a number of specific constructs that are used to make sense of these elements. Various methodological variants allow one to investigate the type and number of constructs actually used by a given individual, to establish hierarchical and correlational relationships among these constructs, and to examine commonality of response in groups of individuals asked to use a set of specific constructs.

In format, the latter approach can be identical to Osgood's semantic differential (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957; Miron and Osgood, 1966), but there are basic differences in the assumptions and goals of the two techniques. Where a semantic differential asks for metaphoric ratings on highly generalized scales, repertory grids ask

for literal ratings on scales designed to be directly relevant to the items being rated. In a sense, the repertory grid involves a systematic study of the "denotative confounding" that Osgood warns about in the use of the semantic differential.

Grid techniques offer a powerful methodology for measuring attitudes and attitude change. They can be used in case studies of single individuals or large scale studies of group response. They are relevant to studies of general attitudes (toward poetry, for example) as well as highly specific ones (reactions to particular characters in a novel). They can be adapted to measure the effects of teaching, of age, of personality. Their chief limitation is a technical one: they generate an enormous quantity of data and raise statistical issues that require more sophistication than has been evident in most studies of literary response. To avoid being swamped with uninterpreted data, it is even more essential than usual to know in advance what questions are to be asked and which specific analytic techniques will be used to answer them.

To illustrate some of the types of information that grids can yield, we can consider some studies which used supplied constructs and asked for ratings of a number of stories (specific titles were supplied by individual children) (Applebee, 1975, 1976a, 1976b). Responses from samples of six, nine, thirteen, and seventeen year olds indicated that as age increases, there is a tendency toward increasing consensus in patterns of construing. This consensus is greater in the structure of the construct system (e.g., in the way a judgment that a work is "simple" relates to a judgment that it is "long") than in ratings of specific stories. The presence of such consensus

in patterns of construing provides the basis for a shared or common cultural experience; it is a measure of the extent to which each individual's personal construction of the world is similar to that of his or her peers.

Although the structure grows more consistent with age, its basic dimensions are present in the youngest samples studied. Lesser overall consensus in younger samples seems to reflect a more idiosyncratic patterning of individual constructs in the major dimensions, rather than differences in the dimensions themselves. (That is, at six there is less agreement about the specific constructs that contribute to a judgment of liking or disliking, but at both six and seventeen, the judgment of liking or disliking remains an important dimension of response.) It is unclear from the data in these particular studies whether at the younger ages we were measuring stable individual differences or lack of stable structure in individual patterns of response.

Three major dimensions of response emerged and were labelled "evaluation," "simplicity," and "realism." None is particularly surprising; they are intuitively sensible and correspond well with previous studies of response.

There are some interesting developmental changes in the nature of the judgment reflected in these dimensions, however. Among the constructs related to evaluation, for example, both "ends happily" and "works a out as you would expect in the end" shift from positive characteristics at nine to negative ones at seventeen; "disturbing" shifts from a negative to a positive characteristic during the same time period. Each of these can be interpreted as reflecting the increasing concern of the older children with adult literature employing more sophisticated

themes. Simplicity shows a different sort of change. The youngest children studied were concerned primarily with reading difficulty and age appropriateness; the older ones with the contrast between simple and complex books, all of which are adult (1984 versus Far From the Madding Crowd illustrated this contrast in the responses of one seventeen year old; Ice Station Zebra versus The Go-Between illustrated it in the responses of another). Concern with realism also showed an evolution, from the six year old's distinction between the real and the make-believe to a later concern with the distance between the world of the story and that of the reader's own life.

Grid ratings can also be used to examine the general characteristics of stories as perceived by children at a given age and, hence, the way in which these experiences will be shaping the expectations (constructs, representations) present in later encounters with similar genres. In the six to seventeen year old study, for example, the ratings indicated that children enjoyed the majority of their encounters with stories, providing a basis for developing what Britton (1968) has called a "legacy of past satisfactions." Preadolescents also tend to perceive their stories as ending happily (an accurate perception of most children's literature), setting the ground for the "happiness binding" which Squire (1964) has reported as one obstacle limiting the responses of somewhat older children. In this context, Squire's finding can be interpreted as the result of a legitimate expectation (of happy endings) which is no longer appropriate when readers turn from children's literature to more mature literary forms. (That Wilson [1966] found

no evidence of happiness binding in college freshmen suggests that, as one would expect, students eventually develop a new and more appropriate set of expectations for dealing with adult literature.)

Such results are only suggestive of some of the ways that grid techniques, and the theoretical orientation that supports them, can be brought to bear on questions that arise in the study of literary response.

The Nature of Representation

A fascinating question which arises very quickly in the study of response to literature concerns the nature of a representation of experience. There are a number of investigators who offer useful guides in this general area. In my own work, I have drawn heavily upon cognitive theorists, particularly Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky, with a leavening of George Kelly, whose terminology and emphases can be particularly useful in studying behavior in educational contexts. The nature of representation becomes particularly important when we begin to consider the general area of the "influence" or "effect" of literature: however effects are to be formulated, they must alter individuals' representations of experience in specifiable ways.

Recently, Anderson and his colleagues have turned their attention to the nature of representation, in their attempts to understand and to model the processing and comprehension of text (Anderson, 1977; Anderson et al., 1977; Adams and Collins, 1977). Their "schema theory" of comprehension is compatible with the work of the psychologists already mentioned, and elaborates usefully on Bartlett's (1932) early but still relevant studies. For those turning to their work as a prelude to studies of response, there are two dimensions that need careful

consideration. First, the model they have proposed is in its present form essentially a static one, designed to explain how a particular text is comprehended by a particular individual; in studying literary response, we need to think of the interaction between text and the structure of the relevant schemata more directly than Anderson and his colleagues have found necessary. Second, though narrative texts have played an important role in their experimental designs, the particular issues addressed have not made it necessary to formulate very precisely the differences in the processes of comprehension in spectator and participant roles; for the study of literary response, the nature of these differences is one of the major research questions. With these two points in mind, both the theoretical papers and the experimental studies from this group are an excellent starting point for anyone beginning to investigate the effects of literature on our representations of experience or the effects of our experience on response to literature.

Conclusion

The approach which has been recommended in this paper is one in which theoretical constructs play an important role. They shape the questions which are asked and the ways in which particular sets of data will be interpreted. At this stage of our knowledge, at least, the most productive concern seems to be with building up a coherent and consistent portrait of the phenomena we are studying, a portrait structured around such general theoretical constructs as poetic and transactional, spectator and participant, and Piaget's developmental stages. All of these are probably oversimplifications, but useful ones

which further rather than constrict our understanding.

Given that research funds and energies are limited, we gain more from a variety of carefully constructed experimental tasks, each utilizing a limited number of subjects, than from a smaller number of tasks completed by large numbers of people. The IEA studies (Purves et al., 1973) and the NAEP (1972) studies, for example, needed very large samples in order to provide valid and precise estimates of overall achievement levels; but as studies of processes of literary response, the same tasks used with small samples would have been equally informative. As it is, we are left in the IEA and NAEP results with "significant" correlations and "significant" differences which, though real enough, are too small to be worth the effort needed to explain them. Yet their very presence invites interpretation and diverts attention from larger differences that may reflect the operation of more powerful and pervasive dimensions of response.

Given th usefulness of a set of theoretical concepts to guide our work, it is also necessary that our approach to any given set of data be open-minded. There are many useful lines of evidence which can be drawn from literary critics, from linguists, from psychoanalytic studies, from anthropologists and sociologists, from media research, and from the IEA and NAEP. We would lose a great deal if we allowed our interests to be restricted to the findings of those who shared our own presuppositions. There is more than one way to interpret virtually any set of data, and alternate perspectives can sometimes show us how to strengthen and improve our own.

There are a number of ways in which the general framework outlined here awaits further development. On a theoretical level, one of the most

interesting involves the generalization of the notions of poetic form and spectator role experience to other modes of discourse. There are obvious unities in our experiences in the several arts, which Langer (1953) and Gardner (1973), among others, have noted, and many of the lines of development discussed in this paper can be directly paralleled in the other arts. The implications of such a generalization of Britton's model need further and systematic study.

A second, perhaps more practically relevant, dimension in need of amplification concerns the interaction of reader and text--particularly the processes involved in changing a given set of expectations (whether about the specific conventions of literature or the more general characteristics of life). Such changes are hard to study except at a distance because they are usually slow; the effective change from any given experience is usually minimal and the ways of measuring it limited. Nonetheless it is the cumulative effect of such experiences, however minimal any one of them may be, that is our major concern as teachers, as scholars, and as readers of literature.

Notes

1. The stories were transcribed by a familiar adult while the children were telling them. This leads to the loss of most evidence on pronunciation, hesitation, and revision, and a more polished version of the stories than would be the case with tape recordings. Ames (1966) reports analyses of similar stories gathered from essentially the same population in the years following Pitcher and Prelinger's work. Her reports provide some useful amplification of problems encountered in gathering responses to this task.
2. Because poetic techniques can operate recursively on many levels, "attributes" at one level of analysis may be "elements" at another. Characters, for example, can themselves be analyzed as collections of attributes (personality, sex, power, consanguinity, and so on) which place them in specifiable relationships to one another.
3. We can see here an explanation of two phenomena with which parents and teachers are familiar: the child's pleasure in hearing the same story again and again (a process necessary to establish a complete enactive representation of it), and the word-by-word exactness required of any retelling.

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